The 'Agamemnon' of Aeschylus:

A Radical Translation

by

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Introduction

This new translation of the 'Agamemnon' has, I believe, restored to Aeschylus that pagan vigour and understanding which is essential if one is to appreciate not only the work of Aeschylus, but also the civilization of Greece.

Aeschylus, along with many other ancient classical authors, has suffered at the hands of those who have tried to translate Greek into English. Perhaps the greatest disservice done to him - and the others - is the rendering of certain concepts, mostly described by a particular Greek word, in what is fundamentally an un-Hellenic, abstract and moral way - albeit that this seems to be mostly unconsciously done. What results from this thoughtlessness is more often than not a sort of 'Christianizing' of Greek culture in retrospect - and thus a lack of insight into and understanding of the Hellenic way of living.

One thinks here of verses like 1654-1656 from the 'Agamemnon'. This is always mis-translated to give something like: "No more violence. Here is a monstrous harvest and a bitter reaping time. There is pain enough already. Let us not be bloody now." The effect of such a 'translation' - not withstanding the abstract and modem concepts like "time" - is a moral one: the speaker (here, Clytaemnestra) apparently says, after killing Agamemnon and Cassandra, that she does not want any more "violence" and describes her killings as "monstrous".

However, what Aeschylus actually has Clytaemnestra say is: "Let us not do any more harm for to reap these many would make it an *unlucky* harvest: injure them just enough, but do not stain us with their blood." The whole tone is different - she is being practical and does not want to bring misfortune upon herself (or Aegisthus) by killing *to excess*. The killings she has done are quite acceptable to her - she has vigorously defended them claiming it was her duty to avenge her daughter and the insult done to her by Agamemnon bringing his mistress, Cassandra, into her home. Clytaemnestra shows no pity for the Elders whom Aegisthus wishes to kill: "if you must", she says, "you can injure them. But do not kill them - that would be *unlucky* for us."

Another example will make clear how moral abstractions are projected onto the text by the mistranslation of certain words. Consider lines 369-373 from the 'Agamemnon'. Conventionally: "A man thought the gods deigned not to punish mortals who trampled down the delicacy of things inviolable. That man was wicked."

A correct rendering would be along the following lines: "Someone denied that the gods deem it worthy to concern themselves with mortals who trample upon what, being untouchable, brings delight. But such persons have [or 'show'] no *proper respect*."

The difference here is startling and obvious. The first is moral in the Christian sense - involving abstract, fundamentally monotheistic notions like 'wickedness' and 'sin'. The second is pagan, or Hellenic, and re-presents the true spirit or ethos of the Greek civilization.

The result of this moral projection - and other acts of thoughtlessness - has been to destroy the vitality of the original and, incidently, make it seem rather boring. I, however, have taken a new and radical view of those concepts and words - such as kakos and so on - which are important to both a general and specific understanding of the Agamemnon. The result is this present work (which incidently solves some hitherto intractable problems of textual interpretation) - Volume I of which is the present Translation, and Volume II the rather extensive Commentary necessitated by such a radical approach. I have explained my interpretations in detail in Volume II.

In my translation I have tried to capture not only the pagan ethos of the original but also the images and metaphors of Aeschylus. The result, I hope, is a version which is enjoyable in its own right when either read or heard in performance, and which can be of use to students of Greek and the civilization

of Greece.

The text used is that of Martin West (Teubner, 1991).

Note: Since this html document was produced by digitally scanning the printed text, there may be scanning errors missed in proof reading.

Notes on Performance

The language of Aeschylus - particularly in the Choral Odes - is flowing and expressive. It is not what was the language of 'everyday' speech and Aeschylus often seems to invent language in an attempt to express his meaning - compound words; omitting the article.

Often on a first reading or hearing, the sometimes complex method of construction Aeschylus uses may cause one to 'lose the thread' of meaning if one is inattentive - and Aeschylus certainly repays attention.

In my translation, I have striven to express something of the kind of vitality found in Aeschylus - to try and re-present the poet in another language which is not, like Greek, an inflective one. At the same time I have tried to keep his meanings, images and metaphors as I find them. In performance, some of the seeming complexities of the Choral Odes can be overcome by different members of the Chorus speaking different lines. Generally, when such a division is required, the text of the translation is indented and this often follows the strophic patterns of the Greek [unfortunately these divisions are not in this *html* web version]. However, within a particular strophe or antistrophe two speakers can be used to advantage.

Sometimes, wordless cries of horror or woe are appropriate: at the beginning of line 1100 for example, and at line 1114. At fines 1072 and 1076 Cassandra makes an 'invocation' to Apollo - a series of sounds rather like an incantation. In performance, the loud, repetitive chanting of certain 'vowel sounds' would suffice - e.g. "I-A-O! I-A-O! followed by the chanting of the name of the god, Apollo.

Dramatis Personae:

Watchman

Chorus (of Argive Elders)

Clytaemnestra

Herald

Agamemnon

Cassandra

Aegisthus

Scene: *The dwelling of Agamemnon at Argos. Near the dwelling stands a statue of Apollo.*

Agamemnon

Watchman:

Again I have asked the gods to deliver me from this toil,

This vigil a year in length, where I repose

On Atreidae's roof on my arms, as is the custom with dogs
Looking toward the nightly assembly of constellations
And they who bring to mortals the storm-season and the summer:
Those radiant sovereigns, distinguished in the heavens
As stars when they come forth or pass away.
And still I keep watch for the sign of the beacon,
The light of the fire which will bring report of Troy,
Announcing it is captured. For such is the command
And expectation of that woman with a man's resolve.

So I have a restless night and dew upon my couch,
With no dreams being visited upon me -
Since it is Fear and not Sleep who stands beside me,
Making it unsafe for Sleep to close my eyes -
And when I deem to sing or to chant
Some song as a prepared cure against Sleep,
Then I grieve, lamenting the misfortune of this family
Whose nobility lacks the perfection it possessed before.

But may it be my fortunate fate to be delivered from this toil
By that fire, which announces fortune, becoming visible in the darkness.

[The bonfire Beacon is seen, blazing]

Hail to that blaze, which makes night into day
With its light! And there will be an appointing of dancers

In Argos in their multitude because of this favourable event!

Awake! Awake!

To the Lady Agamemnon I give this loud signal

That she may swiftly arise from her bed and for her family

With ululation for this blazing auspicious omen

Raise her voice! For indeed the citadel of Ilion

Has fallen, as the bonfire most clearly declares. As for myself, I shall open the celebrations.

And I shall count the fortunate throw by my Lord

As mine, since I am cast as a triad of six by my beacon-watch.

Therefore, let it be that when he of the friendly hand arrives,

That my own hand is grasped by that Master of this dwelling.

As to other things - I am silent. Upon my tongue a great weight

Will be placed. But this dwelling itself - were it given a voice -

Would surely speak. As to my own intent:

To those who know, there is a speaking;

To those who do not know, a concealment.

[Exit Watchman, Enter Chorus]

<u>Chorus:</u>

It is the tenth year since that mighty accuser of Priam,

Lord Menelaus, and Agamemnon -
They of that double-throne and double-realm given by Zeus

Who thus honoured the stalwart pair, those sons of Atreus -
Went, with an Argive fleet of a thousand,
From this land as avenging warriors
With a mighty war-cry from their hearts
As vultures afflicted by their offspring being lost
And who, high over the nests, circle around -
Their wings the oars which move them -
Since those young, laboured-over in the nest, are gone.

But one of Apollo or Pan or Zeus hears the lofty
Sharp cries of the loud lamentation of those resident alien birds
And sends forth an avenging Fury against the offenders.
Thus were those sons of Atreus sent forth
By mighty Zeus, guardian of hospitality, against Alexander
On account of that woman who has had many men.
And many would be the limb-wearying combats
With knees pushed into the dirt
And spears worn-out in the initial sacrifice
Of Trojans and Danaans alike. What is now, came to be
As it came to be. And its ending has been ordained.
No concealed laments, no concealed libations,
No unburnt offering

Can charm away that firm resolve.
But I of the aged flesh was exempt
And so, left behind by those defenders, stay here -
Holding onto my staff with a strength equal to that of a child.
For that young marrow which reigned within the breast
Is the equal of an old man's - and Ares is not at his post.

Thus, he of great Age, his foliage drying up
And no stronger than a child, with three feet to guide him on his travels,
Wanders - appearing a shadow in the light of day.

[Clytaemnestra is seen, silently making offerings]

But you, the daughter of Tyndareus, royal Clytaemnestra,
What necessity, what that is new, what knowledge
Or message persuaded you to send around for incense to be burnt?
For all the gods who support this community -
Those above, the chthonic,
The celestial and of the Agora -

Are given gifts in abundance on their altars.
And from one place to another, flames rise up
To the celestial heights,
Anointed with sacred oil -
Soothing, unblemished and soft -
A libation from the royal sanctum.

Tell me of these things, if it is fitting
And proper - and consent to being healer of what divides me.
That which now brings to me a bad judgement
And then, from a sacrifice, a pleasing revelation,
A hope, to repel the numberless thoughts:

The affliction which feeds on my life.

I have the mastery to invoke those commanding men,
Of auspicious omen and mature -
For still the numen of the gods is with me,
Giving conviction, a strength to my choral-dance which grows with my age
Of how the double-throned might of the Achaeans,
The vigour of Hellas commanded by a common reason,
Were conveyed with avenging hands and spears
To the land of the Teucri by those fierce birds -
The Chieftain of birds of prey to Chieftain of Ships,
A black one and one with white back -
Manifesting near the tent-pole and, by the spear-throwing hand,
Settling, all-transfixing,
To feed on hares who, overburdened by offspring within,
Were stricken because last in the race.

Even though it is a skilful victory - say a lament!

Thus the worthy prophet of warriors, beholding those two,

Dismembering hares, saw the doubly-resolved sons of Atreus
Commanded by those Chiefs. And he spoke this of that omen:
The citadel of Priam, by this going forth, finally captured
All the fortifications;
Most of its folk acquired, enslaved - by a purging Fate
Subdued.

Only let no dislike from a divinity cover-up
This great mouth for Troy by striking first these assembled warriors!
For Artemis - the respected one - lamenting, is hostile
To those winged hunters of her father
Sacrificing the unborn young and their fearful bearer:
For she loathes this eagle-feast.

Even though it is a skilful victory - say a lament!

The Fair-One is good-natured toward
[The young who cannot follow the hunting lion,
And the breast-loving sucklings of all
Who rule in the wilds are pleasing to her.
Thus it should be asked that this prediction is fulfilled -
For though auspicious, this bird-omen could be false.]

So make invokations to the healing Paeon
That she does not cast her breath against the Danaans

Causing delay by holding the ships so they cannot sail
So that a second sacrifice beyond what is customary is required
An uneaten one -
Constructing a quarrel for those joined in planting,
With no man respected,
Another straightening, a waiting terrible
Cunning ruler of a dwelling:
A Frenzy seeking retribution for a child.

Such were the things Calchas called forth -
Of great advantage to and fated for, the ruling family -
From the manner of those birds.
And this has that same sound:
Even though it is a skilful victory - say a lament!

Whenever that being came to be, if the name Zeus
Is pleasing, then by that I so call him.
I do not possess a model -
When I reflect upon the whole - except Zeus
If this foolish thing, the burden of Thought, is indeed
To be really taken from me.

There is nothing of that powerful being who existed before
Who, replete with boldness, fought anyone:
Of how he came to be, nothing can be told.
And the one produced after that, departed

Following a triad of combats.

If anyone, from reasoning, exclaims loudly that victory of Zeus,
Then they have acquired an understanding of all these things;
Of he who guided mortals to reason,
Who laid down that this possesses authority:
'Learning from adversity'.

Even in sleep there trickles through the heart
The disabling recalling of the pain:
And wisdom arrives regardless of desire,
A favour from daimons
Who have taken the seats of honour, by force.

Thus it was with that most respected leader
Of the Achaean ships -
With no rebuke for any prophet,
His breath the same as that of the Fortune which struck him
When the urns were emptied without sailing,
His Achaean warriors wearied
With holding what was opposite to Chalcidos
From where the foam returned to Aulis -

And who, while that breath arrived from Strymon,

Were badly at rest, hungry, anchored wrongly,
Men crowded together, careless with anchoring ropes and the ships

themselves:
There a long while, a double length
Which wore out and blunted the vigour of Argos.

And then of another remedy - more grievous
Than those injurious storms - did the prophet
Shrilly cry to those leaders:
Calling upon Artemis so that those sons of Atreus,
Striking the ground with their staffs,
Could not hold their tears.

Then the elder of those Lords, spoke - saying these things:

Not to yield on this would be a hard Fate,
But to slay my child - she who honours our dwelling - is hard, also:
A gushing near the altar, from the slitting of a virgin's throat,
To pollute a father's hand.
Which of those is without injury?
How could I live - a deserter from a ship,
Having failed in my duty to my comrades?
For, to stop the winds, their desire

Above all desires is to offer in sacrifice
The blood of a virgin. So I call upon Themis
For what is best, to be.

But when he had put on that yoke of destiny

He breathed out changing reasons - disrespectful,
Without reverence, and profane.
Thereafter, his understanding lost, his judgements
Were excessively bold.
For mortals are given courage, their discernment harmed,
When the first injury is a hard deceiving blow.

So he dared
To become the sacrificer of his daughter
To aid a battle to avenge a woman
By so consecrating the ships.
Her warning of 'Father!', her supplications,
Her virgin state - were counted as nothing
By those commanders lusting for battle.

After invokations, her father ordered the servants
To lift up and place upon the altar - like a yearling goat -
She who with all her passion had bent down
To grasp his robe,
And to place a guard upon her beautiful lips -
To prevent a sound from bringing misfortune to the family -
By the power of a strong bridle making her without a voice.
Then, as she poured to earth that which stained her garment,
So at each sacrificer she cast from her eyes
Arrows of lamentation:

As if she were pre-eminent within a painting With a desire to speak,
As often at her father's good feasts
In the male dining-room she had, in song:
When - undeflowered, with her pure voice,
Honouring her beloved father -
She had with the third libation pleasingly sang
A paeon for good fortune.

I did not see, and do not speak of, what followed these things.
But the art of Calchas was not so incomplete:
The goddess, Judgement, favours someone learning from adversity.
But I shall hear of what will be, after it comes into being:
Before then, I leave it,
Otherwise, it is the same as a premature grieving.
Yet what does arrive, will be clear and align with those things.

May what is after what is now, be a favourable outcome -
As desired by the one left to protect these defences,
She closest to the fatherland of Apia.

Honouring your authority, Clytaemnestra, I am here:
For it is customary to respect the leader's woman
When the throne is left empty by the man.
If what you have learnt is not something good -
That you so make offerings for a welcome message, of hope -
Then I have the good judgment to hear it, and also not be envious of silence.

Clytaemnestra:

It is often said that it is Dawn,
Born from her mother, Night, who brings welcome messages.
For you will learn of a joy greater than any you hoped to hear of:
The Argives have captured the citadel of Priam!

Chorus:

What do you announce? In my disbelief, your words fled from me.

Clytaemnestra:

Is this speaking clearly? - Troy is Achaean property

Chorus:

Joy comes out from within me, bringing with it tears!

Clytaemnestra:

Your eyes reveal your good judgement.

Chorus:

But - what sign have you? And do you trust such a thing?

Clytaemnestra:

Certainly, I do - unless I am being tricked by a god.

Chorus:

Do you honour what is rightly yielded to - a portent in a dream?

Clytaemnestra:

I have no belief in what I receive when my reason is asleep.

Chorus:

Has then an oracle - not from augury - gladdened you?

Clytaemnestra:

Would you tarnish me with the reasoning of a young girl?

Chorus:

Then - how long has it been since the citadel was ravaged?

Clytaemnestra:

I say within that night whose child is this Dawn.

Chorus:

But who is the messenger who is so swift?

Clytaemnestra:

Hephaistos, bringing forth from Ida a radiant blaze:
A courier sent here to light bonfire after bonfire.
First, Ida to the rock of Hermes at Lemnos
And then, from that isle, the great bonfire third in line
On Zeus' mountain at Athos received he
Who on his back high over the sea
Conveyed that pleasing pine-torch of the strong flame:
Its golden light another sun,
Its blaze passing on the message to the towers of Makistos.

But he did not stop and neither did he - since there was no reason -
Let sleep triumph over him and so let go of his role as messenger.
Thus to the streams of Euripus from afar came the bonfire's radiance,
A sign to the watchmen of Messapios:
And, as the messenger passed on by them, they answered,
Raising a fire from their pile of gnarled wood.

The torch, vigorous and far from extinguished,
Bounded over the Asopian plain
To the rocks of Cithaeron as bright as the moon
So that the one waiting there to begin that fire, jumped up:

And those guards, praising this torch conveyed from afar,
Lit a fire greater than any I have spoken of before.

Then, the torch was rushed over lake Gorgopis
To reach the peak of Goat Mountain -
Rousing there a fire-ritual not for some favour
Where without envy of its might the kindled fire sent upwards
A great beard of flame -
And so on and over, beyond where the Saronic channel
Reflects the cliffs, onwards and blazing!

Then, rushing on, it then reached the summit of Spider's rock
And so approached the watch-towers of this town.
Thence - to the roof of the Atreidae here - rushed
What had not been without a father since that fire at Ida:
That torch, there!

Thus, willingly, were the functions of those who race with torches,
One after the other, fulfilled in succession
By he who, being first and last, was the victor.
I say to you, by such a sign and means
Did my man pass the message out of Troy to me.

<u>Chorus:</u>

My lady - later, I will invoke the gods,
But I am so with wonder at hearing what you said

That if you would continue, and speak again, it would be agreeable.

<u>Clytaemnestra:</u>

On this day, the Achaeans possess Troy -
With, I deem, within the citadel a clashing of cries of war.
For if, into the same urn, oil and vinegar are poured,
There would be no calling them companions, since they keep apart.

Thus apart are those seized and they who overwhelmed -
Giving voice to how both of those fortunes arose.
As those - casting themselves down near the bodies
Of husbands, brothers, sires,
The young of their elders - who, from a neck no longer free,
Bewail the fate of those loved ones.
While those others, following the toil of battle, wander in the night,
Hungry, for a meal of whatever the citadel contains,
Stationing themselves - with nothing to mark their share -
As if each one had drawn his lot by chance.

Thus, in spear-taken dwellings,
They now abide - delivered, as from an unlucky daimon,
From the open air with its frost and dews,
To sleep the whole night with no guard.

If they conduct themselves properly toward the guardian gods of the folk

Whose land they have seized - and the abodes of those gods -
Then those who have seized may not be seized in return.
So let not what first attacks those warriors be a desire
To plunder what they should not - a victory for profit;
For they require protection when returning to their homes
After turning around for the second leg of their journey.
And should the warriors arrive without being bereft of their gods,
There is the injury done to those killed, who are watching:
If no sudden bad fortune arise.

Such are the things one hears from me - a woman.
But one will see, with no division of opinion, the best superior
For that is the benefit I have chosen, from many honourable things.

Chorus:

My lady, with the reasoning of a man, you express good judgement.
Hearing of those signs you trust
I will prepare myself so I can, fittingly, speak with the gods.
For, with no dishonour, this is their reward, earned by our labour.

[Exit Clytaemnestra]

You, Zeus our Chief, and Nox, our companion -
Mistress of the mighty cosmos
Who cast over the Trojan towers a covering net
Such that neither the full-grown nor any young were beyond the limits

Of Misfortune's all-taking enslaving vast trawl.
This act was yours, Zeus - you who are honoured
As the mighty guardian of hospitality:
You who long ago at Alexander drew your bow
Such that neither before the mark nor toward the stars
Would these arrows be hurled, in vain.

They can say they have a wound from Zeus:
Such is manifest from the marks he has left.
He chose, he acted. Someone denied
That the gods deem it worthy to concern themselves with mortals
Who trample upon what, being untouchable, brings delight.
But such persons, have no proper respect.
Yet their descendants are revealed
By the breath of Ares as lacking courage -
Proud instead of fair -
Their abodes excessively overflowing
Beyond what is for the best.

For unharmed is the one
Who rightly reasons that what is sufficient, Is what is allotted to him.
For there is no protection
In riches for the man of excess
Who stamps down the great altar of the goddess, Judgement,

In order to hide it from view.

But vigorously endures Temptation -
That already-decided daughter of unbearable Misfortune.
And all remedies are in vain.
Not concealed, but conspicuous -
A harsh shining light -
Is the injury.

For, like bad bronze
Struck and rubbed, he becomes blackly-covered
As is the customary practice [as a boy
In pursuit of flying game]
Laying upon the folk an unbearable affliction.

But not one of the gods hears the supplications:
Instead, they take down those persons
Who, lacking fairness, turn their attentions to such things.
And such a one was Paris -
Who, visiting the clan of those son's of Atreus,
Insulted them - their hospitality - by stealing a woman.

Thus - leaving behind her people: the tumult of shields,
Of assembling cohorts and of loading weapons upon ships
She brought to Ilion for her ransom, ruin!
Proud beyond pride, with ease she passed through the gates.

And there was much sighing

Among those prophets of the clan who spoke:

Alas for this clan! - and its leaders!

Alas for that union - and the path to that lover of men!

There stands he - silent, curseless in his dishonouring

Who knows that she whom he enjoyed, has deserted him.

And, desiring what is overseas,

The opinion shall be - a ghost rules this clan.

Thus will those skilful shapely statues

Be hated by that man for their beauty

Since, lacking in eyes,

All the passion is gone.

And a dream-revelation of her returning, weeping,

Will he believe - bringing him a moment's joy:

For it is momentary - as when one believes one beholds what is fortunate -

The vision which slips through the arms, and is gone: not lingering

As those flights which accompany sleep's journeys.

And, at family altars, there was a grieving such as his.

Yet what is, goes beyond what then was:

Since - for those many others who, together, rushed forth from this land of Hellas

There is mourning, courageously borne,

Perceptible in every one of their dwellings.

And many are touched by anger.

For, indeed, those whom they sent forth
Were known to them - yet, instead of a man,
Armour and ashes have returned
To each of those families.

And Ares - exchanging bodies for gold
And holding his scales among the combat of spears -
Has, from Ilion by his fire
Conveyed to their loved ones a painful lament - that heavy dust
He had exchanged for their men: ashes, stuffed into easily-stowable urns.

Thus do they grieve for those warriors, rightly speaking
Of how that one excelled in combat
And of how another honourably fell amid the killing
"On account of that foreign woman".
That is what some whisper, growling.

And, because of this creeping pain, there is resentment
Against those sons of Atreus: they who were the first to accuse her.
Yet there are others who, around those ramparts,
Are encased by that Ilian soil
Which covers-up their bodily beauty
And which - since they are enemy occupiers - will conceal them.

Now, rudely do folk talk in their anger -

Of payment a curse delivered by the people.
And I remain here, listening,
Anxious, in the darkness of night.
For the gods are not unobservant
Of those who have slaughtered many:
In due measure, there is a dark Avenger
For he who attains fortune without fairness -
A reversal of fortune, a life rubbed away
And obscured. And, becoming unknown,
No one defends him. To over-step the bounds of praise
Is rude - and sent forth to their eyes
Is a thunderbolt from Zeus.

Prosperity without hostility is my preference:
I am not a destroyer of clans
So therefore may I never be captured,
To behold a life of subservience to foreigners.

With that beacon-fire - its welcome message -
A rumour hastily passed through the clan:
But does anyone know whether it is true
From the gods - or whether it is false?

Whose reason is so injured, or so childish,
That his heart is set on fire by a sudden fiery signal

And then is sick when the news is changed?

It is shown by a woman's spear

That they approve of what is graceful

Rather than what gleams.

Easily captivated, the female boundary is swiftly trespassed upon,

And swiftly-fated to die is that fame which a woman bestows.

We shall soon learn about those light-bearing torches,

That exchanging of fire, and the beacon-watching -

That is, whether they are real, or whether that light, pleasurable,

Arriving in some dream, deceived the reason.

For I behold, coming from the shore, a Herald

Shaded by sprigs of olive. And, for me, the testimony of that mud,

Sister to and bounded by the dry dust,

Is that he will not lack a voice, and neither will he -

Setting alight mountain wood - signal us with the smoke of a fire

But will either utter the words most delightful for us

Or ... - but what is the opposite of this is displeasing to speak of.

To what has, favourably, been seen, let what is favourable to us, be added.

Whomsoever makes invokations other than for this clan,

May the crop that is his reason, fail.

[Enter Herald]

<u>Herald:</u>

I hail my fatherland - this Argive soil!

In this, the tenth moon of the year, I have returned!
One of my expectations, attained - after a multitude shattered!
For I never boasted that, here, on this Argive soil
I would die, obtaining a most agreeable fate - a funeral feast!

I salute this soil, I salute this sun-light
And Zeus, supreme over this land - and also he who mastered that Serpent:
May you no longer cast forth at us arrows from your bow!
Sufficient, by the banks of the Scamander, was your hostility:
Now, therefore, be our defender and Champion,
Lord Apollo. You gods of combat -
I speak to you all - and to my protector,
Hermes, the Heralds' comrade whom we Heralds respect,
And to the Heroes, our escort: be friendly, again,
And welcome those warriors who have survived the war.

I greet that dwelling which sheltered my own Chief,
Those seats of honour, those daimons in opposition to the sun
Who perhaps long ago looked brightly upon him -
Fittingly receive our Chief, who has been greatly delayed.
For returning to you carrying with him through the night a blazing fire
To be shared among you all - is our Lord, Agamemnon!
Therefore, properly greet him - for he is worthy,
Since, harrowing-down Troy with that retribution-bringing
Spade of Zeus, he levelled-down their earth:

Unseen are the altars and the shrines of their gods
With every seed of that soil utterly destroyed!
He who placed a yoke upon Troy -
That man with a lucky daimon, the elder son of Lord Atreus -
Is returning! Now, after such things, he is the mortal who most deserves
A reward. For neither Paris, nor they who belonged to his clan,
Can boast that a deed of theirs surpassed their adversity.
The penalty for the pillage and theft was fair -
He lost his booty and completely ruined
His own land with his father's family cut down:
Those sons of Priam have paid twice for their weakness!

Chorus:

Greetings to you - Herald of those Achaean warriors.

Herald:

And greetings to you. Before the gods - I will no longer speak against my death!

Chorus:

Did you prepare for this because you loved your fatherland?

Herald:

Indeed. It is because of joy that my eyes are full of tears.

Chorus:

Then the sickness that struck you brought a delight?

Herald:

In what way? If you instruct me, I can master those words.

Chorus:

In that you longed for those who in their turn loved what you did.

Herald:

Are you saying you missed those warriors as they missed this land.

Chorus:

Indeed. So gloomy was my reasoning, that there were many lamentations.

Herald:

How did such faulty reasoning - abhorrent to those warriors - come to be?

Chorus:

Since long ago my remedy for such an injury has been silence.

Herald:

But why? The ruler absent - did someone make you tremble?

Chorus:

Indeed - so that, as you mentioned, it would be very agreeable were I to die now.

Herald:

Yes - it has ended well, although the wait was long.

Some things - fortunate happenings - should be spoken of,

Although there are other things to complain about.

Who - except for the gods -

Passes their entire life without any injury at all?

Were I to recount our toil, our bad quarters -

Our scanty relaxations and defective coverings -

What was not allotted to us for part of a day, what things were not moaned about?

Then those other things about that land - and with greater disgust!

For we slept near those hostile fortifications

Where, from the heavens and out from the earth of those meadows,

Dews drizzled down upon us, constantly harming us,

Breeding vermin in our body-hair and clothes.

If I told of those bird-killing Winters -

Of how the snows of Ida made them unbearable;
Or of the heat at mid-day, when the sea -
Waveless, windless - rested and fell asleep ...

But why be afflicted by such things? Those labours have been left behind
And left behind by those lying dead:
Their recovery is no longer of any concern to them.
Why speak about the count of those who were destroyed?
Why should those who live grieve at Fortune's repeated anger? -
Since there is much to rejoice at in that favourable event!

For we Argive warriors who remain,
Our gain is superior to not outweighed by - our injury,
Because, by this light of day, this boast is just,
To be rushed far beyond this land and its seas:
"Argive weapons have at last captured Troy!
To the gods of Hellas, the spoils -
Splendid antiquities, staked to their Temples!"

On hearing this, there should be eulogies to our clan
And its leaders, and honour given to he whose favour
Wrought this - Zeus himself!
You have the whole story.

Chorus:

I will not deny that yours is the better story.

For, in the old, what is still virile is the skill to learn.
But those things are naturally of the foremost concern to Clytaemnestra
And her family - although, together with them, I could profit.

[Enter Clytaemnestra]

Clytaemnestra:

Long ago, out of joy, was my ululation
When that first messenger - fiery, nocturnal - arrived,
Announcing Ilion's capture, its devastation.
And someone rebuked me by saying: "Does a bonfire
Persuade you to believe Troy is now destroyed?
How very womanly - to so extol the heart!"
Such was the language used to show I was lost!

I, however, made offerings - and, as is the practice with women,
One following another - ululations went on through the clan
To celebrate this good fortune while, within the shrines of the gods,
The flames devoured our fragrant incense until they slept.
So now - what further words do you have for me?
I shall ask the Chief himself for the whole story,
Honouring and respecting he who is my husband
By hastening to receive him on his return.
For what day can a woman behold that is more pleasing

Than the one when - her man unharmed in battle because of the gods -
She opens her gates for him? Announce this to my husband
So that he who is beloved by this clan most swiftly arrives.
On his return, he will find that the woman of the family has been honourable
As she was when he left her - a guard-dog for this family,
Faithful to them, hostile to those badly disposed toward us,
And in all ways the same, no seal
Having been violated during this long wait.
I enjoy neither the pleasure of, nor the speaking of rumours by,
Other men any more than I do tempered bronze.

[Exit Clytaemnestra]

<u>Herald:</u>

A boast such as that - full of revelations -
Uttered by a woman of breeding, is not disgraceful.

<u>Chorus:</u>

Thus she speaks about herself - you will learn
To correctly interpret such dignified speech!
But speak to me, Herald, of Menelaus - for I seek to know about him:
Whether he has returned and whether, uninjured,

He who is loved in this land journeyed back with you.

Herald:

1 cannot possibly speak falsely about honourable things

Since my comrades would reap the results for a long while after.

Chorus:

Why - given your joyful revelation - do you happen to say that?

For it is no easy to keep secret something which has been opened -up.

Herald:

About that leader, there are no sightings from among those Achaean warriors -

Of he himself and his ship. This is no false story.

Chorus:

Was he observed going away from Ilion -

Or carried off from those warriors by that common affliction, a storm?

Herald:

As a master archer, you hit your target,

Reporting a considerable injury, concisely.

Chorus:

But which - of he being either living or dead -
Was the rumour among the other sailors?

Herald:

No one has accurate information - no one knows,
Unless it be Helios, whose nature is to feed the earth.

Chorus:

But tell me - how came that storm to those warriors,
And what did that wroth from daimons achieve?

Herald:

On a day of good omen it is not fitting for bad announcements
To be voiced, staining it - on it, only the gods should be given tributes.
But when a horrible injury is what a messenger to the clan
Conveys with a gloomy face - of warriors defeated
That, for the clan, a single wound has befallen the folk:
Many men from many families taken in sacrifice
By that double-lance beloved by Ares,
Both of its injurious double-points bloody,
Then, when one is loaded-down with injuries such as these,
It is fitting to utter those paeans of the Furies!

Yet when good news which preserves fortunes

Arrives at a clan favoured with well-being ....

How to mingle the joyful with the bad, to say that it was

Not without the wroth of the gods that the storm came to the Achaeans?

For, binding themselves by an oath, those former bitter enemies

Fire and Sea, showed their trust

By destroying those unfortunate Argive warriors.

The treachery of that bad-swelling came at night

For that Thracian breath pushed the ships one against another

So that their horns struck, damaging them

With tempest of heavy rain and typhonic-storm -

The treacherous guardian whirling them away out of our sight.

Then, when Helios came back with the splendour of dawn,

We beheld corpses growing in the Aegean sea

Achaean men from their wrecked ships.

As for us, the hull of our ship was unharmed,

For someone stealthily took us away or interceded for us -

Not a mortal, but some god who, touching us, steered us.

Fortuna, to preserve us, willingly placed herself on board

So that we were neither at anchor - taking in that surging tempest -

Nor being driven toward the rocky shore.

Then, having escaped Hades at sea -

In the brightness of day, with no belief in our good fortune

We wandered for reasons as to our recent misfortunes,

The toil of the warriors, and this bad beating.

Now, if any of them, breathing, has being,
They will speak of us as destroyed - and why not?
For we hold to the same presumption about them.

What is best, will be. Now, as to Menelaus.
First - and before others - expect his arrival.
That is, if the radiance of Helios can reach him
And he is alive and healthy by the planning of Zeus -
Whose will would never be to annihilate that seed.
There is hope that he shall be with his family again.

So much you know - be assured, what you have heard is not false.

[Exit Herald]

Chorus:

Who was the one who - in all ways true - named her?
Was it not someone who is never seen -
With a perception of destiny -
Whose tongue, chancing upon it, bestowed upon she
Of that quarrel-making, battle-producing marriage
The name Helen?
Since, fittingly named, she - man-seducing, clan-seducing, ship-seducing -
Leaving her gorgeous web of veils,
Was with the breath of the giant Zephyrus
Navigated away.

And many were the shield-bearing men who hunted her -
Following those unclear marks left by the oars
To that shore of the thriving-leaves at Simois,
Because of those blood-letting Furies.

Indeed, it was Ilion who was subjected to the judgement
Frenzy had urged for that rightly-named alliance:
Such followed after a while, for the dishonour done
By that guest - and to Zeus, guardian of hospitality,
Who acted against those who uttered their approval
Of the consummation of that marriage in song:
Those kinsfolk who favoured chanting Hymen's hymn.
But they were taught a different hymn,
Those of Priam's venerable clan,
Full of lamentations: a great groaning
Calling Paris 'he of that disgusting marriage!"
But even before this, for a long while,
That clan was full of lamentations on account of suffering
Such a waste of their blood.

Even thus there was reared among a family by a man
A daughter of a lion -
Breast-loving but left without milk -
Tame at the start of its life, rightly befriended by children,
Pleasing to their elders,

Who was often in their arms.
As is customary with a newly-reared child

Its bright eyes looked upon the hand as it begged
When its stomach pained it.
But, later, it showed those habits
It had from its parents -
For the delight of those who had reared it was repaid
By a ruinous slaughter of sheep
As it made them, uncommanded, its feast
And their dwelling was moistened by their blood:
A grief for their servants who could not do battle with
That large frequently-killing pest.
Yet, she reared within that family was appointed by some god
To offer such sacrifices to Misfortune.

Now, in like manner, I say there arrived at the citadel of Ilion

What was considered to be stormless, lacking in gales
A glory of voluptuousness in abundance,
The delicate arrows from whose eyes
Wounded the heart bringing forth desire.
But there was a laying-down-beside, achieving through intercourse
That bitter conclusion:
An inauspicious companion - unlucky for them -
Was, escorted by Zeus guardian of hospitality, hastened toward

Priam's descendants -
A Fury, making that bride to lament.

Long ago, an Elder - explaining about mortals - said:
On reaching adulthood, a man with possessions
Acquires offspring, never dying childless!
For from the inheritance of a good fortune
There is born the pain of dissatisfaction.
In opposition to others, I have this odd judgement:
Disrespect after it is sown, will produce more
Of the same kind as itself.
But for an open and fair family
There is a succession of agreeable children.

Yet it is usual for an ageing insolence to produce,
Sooner or later in cowardly mortals, a younger insolence.
At the appointed Dawn, there arrives a new envy,
A daimon who cannot be combatted because he will not fight:
Arrogant, Temple-less - a black Misfortune for the family,
As were its parents.

But the goddess, Judgement, can in truth manifest
In well-incensed dwellings -
A favourable omen for those living there.
Yet when dirty hands gild good fortune with gold,
She turns her eyes away,

Eager to go to the-dutiful,

For she has no respect for that ability of the wealthy
To counterfeit praise.
And she sets a limit for everyone.

[Enter Agamemnon, with Cassandra]

I hail my Chief - Descendant of Atreus. -
The destroyer of the citadel of Troy!
How to address you, how to honour you
Without exceeding, without falling short of
The due limits of what is acceptable?
For many are the mortals who, highly esteeming
The appearance of things, go beyond what is fair.

Everyone is preparing to grieve for the ill-fated ones,
But not at all suitable to their display of grief is their anger -
And, appearing to be like those who rejoice,
They - lacking laughter - will have to compel their faces.
Yet to he who has a good knowledge of his herd
A person's eyes cannot conceal what is a feeble begging for friendship
Behind a pretence of reasoned good judgement.

But, when you were preparing those warriors
On account of Helen - I shall not hide this -
What I wrote about you then was very unrefined,

As not fully giving your reason control:
In spite of courage,
She would be returned with men dying.
Yet now to me - neither perfect in reasoning, nor lacking in friends -
Your work was well-judged and well-completed.

In a while, you through inquiry will have knowledge of
Who has been correct and who outside the proper limits
In their duty to this clan while they waited here.

Agamemnon.

It is customary to first greet Argos
And our native gods - they who together with me
Rightly caused our return and our success against the citadel
Of Priam. The gods did not hear from our tongues any pleading -
Yet for man-killing, a destroying of Ilion
Into that blood-stained container with no division of opinion
They cast their votes. While at the opposite container,
Although the hand of Hope came near, nothing filled it.

Even now the smoke of that plundered citadel is a favourable sign:
For the breath of Misfortune is a tempest - a killer
And a wind to convey away the ashes that were their abundant wealth!
It is fitting that we frequently recollect our debt to the gods for these things
Since we were successful against that insolent robber

And, on account of that women, that citadel was laid to rest

By the fierce bite of that newly-born horse - bearing the shields of warriors -

Which, in the season of the Pleiades, leapt forward:

A flesh-eating beast bounding over their fortifications

To gorge itself on the blood of those insolent people!

I stretched out this beginning for the gods;

But, as to your judgements on those other matters which I heard:

I recall them, and declare that I will be an advocate for them

For there exist few men who have the breeding

To - far from envying someone's good fortune - actually honour their comradeship.

The poison of bad judgement comes to settle in the heart,

A doubling of the burden of he who is beset by sickness:

He is loaded down by his own injury

And groans when he beholds someone else's good fortune.

I speak from experience, for I am well skilled

In deflecting the familiarity of those shadowy figures

Who seem to me to be over-friendly.

The only one unwilling to sail, was Odysseus -

But/we made a bond, and he was prepared to work in harness with me.

And it is thus - whether he be breathing or dead -

That I speak of him.

But as for those other matters relating to the clan and the gods

I shall participate in the debates in the assembly,

And then decide. And - obtaining what is agreeable -
The decision should endure so that what is well, remains so.
Whomsoever needs a healing potion -
By a burning-out or a well-judged cutting-away
I shall seek to defeat the sickness of that injury.

Now it is to my dwelling and the family altar
That I go to first salute with my right hand the gods
Who sent me that distance and who brought me back.
Since the goddess, Victory, followed me, may she stay constantly with me!

[Enter Clytaemnestra]

Clytaemnestra:

Clansmen - you Argive Elders, here.
There is no dishonour in me telling you of the nature of my love
For my man. After a while, that fear
Which mortals have of something, dies. It was not because others
Instructed me that I can speak of that bad burden I lived with
While he was that long while near Ilion.
Primarily, for a lady to be separate from her mate -
To remain unprotected by family - is a harsh misfortune:
She hears many harmfully- recurring rumours,
And, as one arrives, another one also conveys a misfortune,
The announcement of another more injurious misfortune for the family.

And, as to wounds, if my man had been struck by as many
As were the reports which poured into this dwelling,
One would reckon he had more holes than a net!
Or, had his deaths been as many as the stories of them,
He would have been a second Geryon, with three bodies -
Ample up-above, not to mention down-below -
Boasting of that three-fold cloaking by the earth which he received:
One death for each and every one of his forms!

It was on account of such harmfully-recurring rumours
That numerous were the nooses, up-above, that from my neck
Others loosened by taking hold of and restraining me.
Thus it is that there is not, standing here beside me,
The child, Orestes - he who ratified that oath between you and I -
As he should have been. Nor be astonished at this.
He is in the care of someone well-disposed toward us: your comrade-in-arms,
Strophius of Phocis. He openly spoke to me about possible trouble -
Of your peril, while near Ilion
And then of a clamouring, leaderless, people
Plotting against us, as it is the nature of mortals
To take advantage by kicking he who falls down.
Such indeed is my defence, conveyed without cunning.

As for me, that rushing Spring of my tears
Has dried up - not a drop remains:

My eyes hurt since I went late to sleep,
Weeping, when those your bonfires
For that long while were not used. And, when I did dream,
I would be awakened by the slightest buzzing from a darting mosquito,
Having beheld misfortunes which, for you,
Lasted longer than the duration of my sleep.

But now - having endured all these things, my judgement untouched by grief -
I say that my man, here, has been a hunter for these settlers,
The main-stay securing our ship, the foundation of the pillars
Of our high roof, the only begotten son of a father:
And that land which, against their hopes, navigators see;
That most agreeable Dawn beheld after a storm,
A gushing Spring a thirsty traveller -
For there is/always delight in escaping from what is disagreeable.

He is worthy of being so greeted,
With hostility leaving us, for numerous were those misfortunes
We hitherto endured. So now, my beloved Lord,
Step down from that carriage, without placing on the ground
These - the feet of my Master - which ravaged Ilion.

You servants! Why do you delay? I assigned to you the task of
Spreading over the ground in his path those coverings!
Directly! - let the way be spread with purple
So that the goddess, Judgement, can lead him to a dwelling beyond his

expectations.

As to other things - my concern, not once conquered by sleep,

Shall, with the gods, arrange what is a fitting Destiny.

Agamemnon:

Descendant of Leda - you who kept watch over my dwelling:

Your speech befitted my absence -

It was a long while before it ended. It is auspicious if others

Praise me - what honours are necessary should come from them.

And also do not give me luxuries fashioned by a woman

Nor - as is the custom among barbarian peoples

Lower yourself to the ground, gaping at me in awe.

Neither cause hostility for me by spreading those garments on that path:

By such things it is fitting to honour a god

But, to me, the mortal who walks upon such purple robes

Would never, in any place, be far from dread.

Therefore I ask that you respect me as a man, not as a god:

"With no foot-kissing and also no such robes" -

The rumour, to be shouted out. Not to badly judge things

Is a great gift - from a god. One's fate is a fortunate one

If one's life ends, agreeably, in well-being.

And I am resolved to always act in such a way.

Clytaemnestra:

Yet speak to me of what is not beyond my understanding.

Agamemnon:

Be assured that I will not be destroyed by "understanding"!

Clytaemnestra:

Did you invoke the gods because you feared doing such things?

Agamemnon:

If it was anything, it was abundant experience that made me know my purpose.

Clytaemnestra:

And Priam? What do you believe he would have done had he achieved these things?

Agamemnon:

It is my certain belief he would have walked upon such robes.

Clytaemnestra:

Then do not now fear any rebukes from mortals.

Agamemnon:

Yet with great vigour, the people will speak.

Clytaemnestra:

But of course! Those who are without enemies also have no one to admire them.

Agamemnon:

It is not becoming for a lady to eagerly love battle.

Clytaemnestra:

Perhaps; but he of abundant fortune becomes distinguished when letting others win!

Agamemnon:

And do you value being given an advantage in this contest?

Clytaemnestra:

Be persuaded - if you willingly allow me this, it is you who triumph.

Agamemnon:

Then if it pleases you; swiftly, someone undo these shoes -
These servants my feet have walked on -
So that when I step upon those purple garments of the gods,
No hostile eyes will wound me from afar.
For it is very ignoble for my feet to ruin my family
By spoiling that abundance of woven cloth, purchased by my silver!
But no more of such things. Treat this stranger well
When you bring her inside. The gods see he who, in victory,
Is lenient - and they treat him well.
For no one, willingly, wants to be yoked as a slave.

But she - a young bloom, plucked, frequently useful,

A gift from my warriors - has come with me.

But since in that other matter I in listening to you gave way,

I shall walk into our dwelling upon that purple path.

Clytaemnestra:

There exists a sea - can anyone staunch it? -

Where that precious-as-silver purple grows

Always to ooze out again, a colouring for garments:

A family, my Lord, has such things given to them by the gods,

And our kinfolk have no experience of having to labour for them.

Yet I would have promised to frequently trample upon garments

Had some oracle pronounced such a thing to our kinfolk

While I was planning to pay for a living being to be brought back.

For, while the root has being, green leaves can come to a family,

Extending it giving shade to a Sirian hunter.

And so you - returning to your family altar

Signalled the arrival of warmth in the storm-season.

And, when Zeus from bitter unripe grapes makes wine,

Then in the family there will be a life

Because its man had frequented that abode which his completely his.

Zeus - you who are complete in all things: accomplish my supplication

By letting your concern be for what you may desire to accomplish.

[Exit Agamemnon, followed by Clytaemnestra]

Chorus:

Why this dread, continuing
To hover-over my soothsaying-life, directing it?
And so I prophesy, in song - with no one bidding me,
No one paying me.
Why not spit it out? -
As is customary with a badly-understood dream
Which, easily over-powering confidence,
Can seat itself upon the cherished throne of reason.
But it was a long while ago - after those anchor-cables clashed,
With ships beached, and vigour lost -
That those warriors rushed forth to Ilion.

Yet I know from my own eyes
Of their return - I am their witness.
And so, although I have no lyre, I sing:
For there is a desire, within me - a self-taught hymn

For one of those Furies,
With nothing at all to bring me
That cherished confidence - hope.
And my stomach is by no means idle -

In fairness, it is from achieving a judgement
That the beat of my heart continues to change.
And so there is this supplication of mine:
For this defeat of my hope to be false
So that, that thing cannot be achieved.

In truth, that frequently unsatisfied goddess, Health,
Has a limit - for Sickness, her neighbour,
Leans against their shared fence;
And it is the fate of the mortal who takes the short-cut
To strike the unseen reef.
And yet if - of those possessions previously acquired
A fitting amount is, through caution, cast forth by a sling,
Then the whole construction will not go under -
Injuriously over-loaded as it was -
Nor will its hull be filled, by the sea.
Often, the gifts from Zeus are abundant
And there is, then, from the yearly ploughing,
A death for famine's sickness.

But if once upon the earth there falls from
A mortal that death-making black blood -
What incantation can return it to his arms?
Not even he who was correctly-taught
How to bring back those who had died

Was allowed by Zeus to be without injury.
Were it not that Fate was ordained
By the gods to make it fated
That when more is obtained it is not kept,
My heart would have been first
To let my tongue pour forth these things.

But now, in darkness, it murmurs,
Painfully-desiring, and having no hope of when
There will be an opportunity to bring this to an end,
Rekindling the fire of reason.

[Enter Clytaemnestra]

Clytaemnestra:

You - and I speak to you, Cassandra - go within,
Since it is Zeus who, with no anger, has placed you here
To share in our family libations, where - with our many servants
You will stand close to that altar guarding our possessions.

Do not be unreasonable - step down from that carriage;
For it was once said that even Alcemene's son
Endured being sold, and the food of servants.
And even if one's fate does incline toward this necessity,
There will be many favours from masters accustomed to wealth:
But they who, unexpectedly, make a useful pile

Are, in everything, strict and cruel to their servants
While, from such as us, that which custom has established, is obtained.

Chorus: [to Cassandra]:

It is to you that she has addressed those plain words.
And, since you are the game Fate decreed would be captured,

Yield - if you can yield and it is suitable to yield

Clytaemnestra:

If indeed she does not - as is customary with swallows -
Possess the speech of a barbarian, she is without learning
For I yielded to reason in addressing those words to her.

Chorus:

Obey her. For what she says is the best thing, for the present.
Yield - and leave your seat in that waggon.

Clytaemnestra:

I certainly cannot delay, here, outside, by prolonging this.
For, concerning our altar, sacred to Apollo,
Even now the sheep are waiting, before their sacrifice:
As we, who never hoped to obtain such a favour as this.
And so, if you are to perform this - do not, by staying here, delay.

But if you do not receive my words because you do not understand us,
Then - instead of speaking - make some sign with those your foreign hands.

Chorus:

This stranger seems to need a skilful interpreter:
She has the manner of a newly-captured wild-beast.

Clytaemnestra:

She is certainly possessed - and listening to defective reasoning;
She who deserted her newly-captured clan
To come here - and who will not be able to bear the bridle
Until the vigour in her blood has been let out, bubbling!
But - having been thus insulted - I will not excite myself any more!

[Exit Clytaemnestra]

Chorus:

Since I could lament for her, I myself am not angry.
Now, unfortunate one, abandon that carriage,
Willingly accepting the necessity of this change to subjection.

[Cassandra leaves the carriage, to stand near the statue to Apollo]

Cassandra:

I, grieving, make lament to my god!

Apollo! Apollo!

Chorus:

Why this loud lamentation in the name of Loxias?
For he is not among those to whom one laments about misfortune.

Cassandra:

1, grieving, make lament to my god!
Apollo! Apollo!

Chorus:

Yet again her call to her god is inauspicious
For he is not of those who attend to such wailing.

Cassandra:

Apollo! Apollo!
God of settlements - my Apollo!
It was not difficult for me to fail you - again!

Chorus:

Will her prophecies concern her own misfortune?
What a god gives, remains - even with reason conquered.

Cassandra:

Apollo! Apollo!

God of settlements-my Apollo!

To where have you led me? To what manner of shelter?

Chorus:

That of those sons of Atreus. If you had not observed this,

Then it is I who have told you - and you cannot pronounce it false.

Cassandra:

It is of they who detest the gods - they who share a knowledge

Of many treacherous cruel slayings of kinfolk,

With mortals sacrificed and the ground moistened.

Chorus:

This stranger, it seems, has the skilful nose customary among hounds:

And, in seeking blood, she will discover it.

Cassandra:

For I am persuaded by testimony from those who,

Lamenting, were sacrificed as children,

Their flesh roasted and devoured by their fathers.

Chorus:

Although I have been informed of your renown at divination

I am not looking for a prophet.

Cassandra:

I lament - for what is it that someone plans?

What new grief ? What is this great,

Great injury planned for a family -

Difficult to heal, difficult for loved ones to bear,

Whose remedy is far away, in distance?

Chorus:

I myself have no knowledge of these prophecies:

But there are others, which echo through all of the clan.

Cassandra:

What suffering! Will it be accomplished? When the partner, sharing the same bed,

Has been rendered clean by that bathing ...

But how can I tell this ending?

Yet it will be swift - a hand stretched out,

The other hand thrusting forth.

Chorus:

As yet, I do not understand; for now, the enigma

Of these unclear oracles is beyond my cunning.

Cassandra:

I behold ... But - what is this manifestation?
Surely - some trap, from Hades?
But the snare is the one who shared the bed
And who will share the blame for that killing.

Never satisfied with our race, Strife will give loud ululations
When, by stoning, there is sacrifice!

Chorus:

What Fury is this that you so exhort it to loudly wail
Against a family? Such words bring me no joy,
And running toward my heart are those yellow-stained drops
As when a spear befalls one,
Achieving with one's life an ending of what is seen:
For it is swiftly that Misfortune arrives.

Cassandra:

There! - I see it! Remove the cow from the bull!
Entangling him in his robes, she strikes
With her black-horned instrument! He falls,

Into a construction containing water.

I speak to you of a death by cunning - during a libation.

Chorus:

I cannot boast of a complete knowledge of message from the gods -

But these resemble ones that are defective:

For, by means of messages from the gods, something useful

Is said to mortals, while through defective ones -

Constructed of many words -

It is a dread of oracles that tends to be learnt.

Cassandra:

It is my injurious Destiny to suffer misfortune!

And with loud cries I pour forth this my affliction:

You brought me here to suffer - but for what?

For whom? If not to die with someone - for what else?

Chorus:

God-possessed, with frenzied reasoning,

You loudly cry wordless odes -

As that song-bird who calls, unanswered -

For, alas, your reason has suffered:

You live with an abundance of ills

As that songstress sighing "Ityn! Ityn!"

Cassandra:

Plaintive was the fate of the songstress!
For there was placed around her a body bearing wings,
Pleasing to the gods - and that struggle to be without tears.
But I await being split-apart by some double-edged weapon!

Chorus:

From where did this god-possession rush upon you
That you toil so uselessly,
Drumming-out in song your fear in shrill
Ill-omened words - almost an ode?
From where came this method of prophecy
By giving voice to misfortunes?

Cassandra:

Alas - for that union, that union by which Paris destroyed His friends!
Alas - for those waters of the Scamander that my ancestors drank!
Once, beside your banks, I was nourished - and grew,
To suffer this.
But now, it seems I shall soon be beside the Cocytus
And the shores of Acheron Chanting my prophecies!

Chorus:

With much skill you announced those words -

The youngest among us, hearing them would understand!

And I - am wounded, stabbed bloodily:

For your chanting invokes such painful misfortunes

That 1, listening, am disabled.

<u>Cassandra:</u>

Alas - for the toil. the toil of my community,

Now totally destroyed!

Alas - for my father making sacrifice by the fortifications,

Slaying numerous grass-fed cattle!

For they were not a cure to relieve those afflictions

That the clan received as they did.

And, as for me, my fiery foresight shall soon be cast down upon earth.

<u>Chorus:</u>

What you announce follows what went before:

Your faulty judgement is caused

By some over-weight daimon falling upon you

So that you sing of death-making afflictions.

But your aim is beyond my cunning.

<u>Cassandra:</u>

Now - no longer giving divine-answers from behind a veil -

I can be looked at, as is customary with a young woman, recently deflowered:

Truly radiant, as when Helios in coming forth
Arrives with his breath - and there is, as is customary with swellings,
A purging in the sunlight of much greater wounds than this one.
But no longer will the information I give be enigmatic
And of the marks of treachery you will be my witness,
Walking with me as I follow the smell of deeds done long ago.
For there are Choral-Dancers who never leave that shelter
They sing displeasing words to what are displeasing sounds.
Now having drunk mortal blood, they are given more courage
These revellers who stay in that dwelling:
And it is difficult to send them away, such is the nature of those Furies.
For they occupy that abode, chanting the chant
Of that primal most significant curse -
Each, separately, telling of their hostility
For he who violated she who was sleeping with his brother.

Have I missed? Or has this archer hit the mark?
Or is it that 1, at divination - as some lover gushing forth - lie?
First swearing an oath, bear witness that I know
The story of the failings of this most ancient family.

<u>Chorus:</u>

How could an oath, that by its nature is constructed to injure,
Come to heal? But I marvel that you -

Who grew up overseas - hit the mark in speaking about another clan..

Cassandra:

It was Apollo - he of oracles - who gave me such work.

Chorus:

Was it that he - a god - was wounded by desire?

Cassandra:

Before now, I was ashamed to speak of it.

Chorus:

Every person who does well has more of luxuries.

Cassandra:

He was a fighter - breathing out much that was pleasing to me.

Chorus:

And, as is the custom, did his exertions lead to you bearing his child?

Cassandra:

In giving my approval for that, I lied to Loxias.

Chorus:

Had you by then been seized by the art of divine inspiration?

Cassandra:

By then, I was giving my oracles concerning everything that afflicted the clan.

Chorus:

Given the rage of Loxias - how is it that you are uninjured?

Cassandra:

Because of my error, no one believed me about anything.

Chorus:

We, however, are of the opinion that your oracles can be trusted.

Cassandra:

Alas - for this misfortune!

Once again, a premonition strangely afflicts me!
Sitting nearby - what began this typhonic storm:
I see them, there, sitting near that dwelling,
Those youngsters - with forms as in some dream
As if killed by those who had cherished them -
Their hands full with that food made from their own flesh,
Organs mixed with entrails: holding a feast to lament for,
Eaten by their father!

Because of this, I say someone plots to avenge:
A lion without strength frequently engaged in copulation,
Who waited here for the master himself to arrive!
As for me - a servant is required to carry a yoke.
But that commander of ships who laid Ilion waste

Does not see as belonging to an insatiable bitch that tongue
Which spoke and in joy stretched out to him, as is the custom.
Preparing an injurious Fate is this concealed Frenzy -
Such boldness! - a woman to slay a man!
What kind of thing is she of the loveless bite?
How to chance upon her name? Amphisbaena? Or Scylla
Who, dwelling near rocks, injures navigators?
The mother of Hades making sacrifice who, proudly,
With no truce, fights against her own kin?
And what loud ululations she - in all things bold - will utter

When she triumphs in her fight!

After appearing delighted by that safe return!

But it does not matter if you are not persuaded by this:

What must be, will arrive - and you yourself, being present here,

Will soon relate in lamentations how my premonition was only too correct.

<u>Chorus:</u>

That feasting of Thyestes on the flesh of children

I listened to - and shivered; for a dread holds me

Having heard a disclosure of what no one has fully described.

But as to learning anything else - having run off course, I fell.

<u>Cassandra:</u>

I announce that you will look upon the dead Agamemnon.

<u>Chorus:</u>

Unfortunate one - let your mouth have a rest from invocations!

<u>Cassandra:</u>

The healing-god was not behind those words.

Chorus:

Indeed, unless he is here: but let that not be so!

Cassandra:

You may wish that - but some are concerned enough to kill.

Chorus:

Who is the man who prepares this trouble?

Cassandra:

My revelations must indeed have disabled you!

Chorus:

I did not hear the means whereby someone will achieve that thing.

Cassandra:

And yet I speak Greek very skilfully.

Chorus:

So do those giving oracles at Pytho - but they are difficult to understand.

Cassandra:

Ah! - As for that fire, it falls upon me!
Ah! - That wild wolf, Apollo, is here ...
There - the lioness with two feet who, with her well-bred
Lion absent sleeps with a wolf -
And she will kill me, the unfortunate, for she prepares
A remedy, putting into my reward her own wroth.
With invokations she sharpens her dagger - for a man,
To take revenge with my blood on he who brought me here.

Why then keep this thing for others to laugh at me?
And this necklace of Apollo? And this wand?
You at least I will destroy before I myself die!
Fall - go to your destruction! Thus do I avenge myself on you.
In my place, give someone else an abundance of misfortune!
Behold! It is Apollo himself who takes from me
These vestments of a priestess! And he looked upon me,
Attired in those things, as I was laughed at
Foolishly, by friends, by those undivided in their hostility:
And called names as if I were some wandering teller of fortunes,
Begging, starving and holding out my hands!
And now the god of prophets, exacting from me his gift of prophecy,
Marches me to a death-making event

Where waits not my ancestral altar but a butcher's block -
A striking-down first as the sacrificial offering of hot blood.

Yet the gods will not let us be dishonoured when we die
Since someone will arrive to defend us -
A mother-slaying descendant avenging his father.
A wandering exile, far from his homeland,
Returning to cap the injury done to his kin:
His father - laid out when his back was turned - will bring him.

So why do I - a settler, here - lament aloud?
Since when I first beheld the clan of Ilion
Acting as they did act - with those of the clan who were taken
Delivered up by decision of the gods -
I have acted to go to take upon myself that death
Since, before the gods, a mighty oath will be sworn.

Thus, it is towards these gates of Hades that I speak:
My wish being to obtain a fatal wound
So that without painful convulsions but with my blood gushing forth
To give me an easy-dying, I may close my eyes.

Chorus:

You - greatly unfortunate, who has great skill in your craft -
Your speech was complex. And yet if you truely know
Your own fate, how can you - as the custom with oxen

Driven to the altar by a god - go there with such boldness?

Cassandra:

There can be no escape, my friend, no more delay.

Chorus:

But the person who is last has the advantage of that delay.

Cassandra:

My day has arrived - little is gained by running away.

Chorus:

Then know that such bold judgment will give you strength.

Cassandra:

No one who has a lucky daimon listens to such things.

Chorus:

Yet mortals are pleased if they die well-known.

[Cassandra moves towards the gates of Agamemnon's dwelling, then stops]

Cassandra:

Alas for you, my father! And your noble descendants!

Chorus:

What is it that you so turn around in fear?

Cassandra:

Dreadful! Dreadful!

Chorus:

Why "dreadful"? Unless The Dreaded One has affected your judgement.

Cassandra:

That family reeks of blood-letting slaughter!

Chorus:

It is but the smell of offerings on the family altar.

Cassandra:

It is the same as that which rises from a burial.

<u>Chorus:</u>

What you speak of is no Syrian luxury for that family.

<u>Cassandra:</u>

Now I will go to that family chanting an elegy about the Destiny

Of Agamemnon and me. What I have lived has been sufficient.

My friends:

I am in no way different from a fearful bird, suspicious

Of a bush. Give testimony to this about my dying;

For me, a woman, another woman shall die -

For her man, unluckily-wed, another man will fall.

1 - about to die - you received as a guest.

<u>Chorus:</u>

Unfortunate one! The fate you foresaw causes me to lament!

<u>Cassandra:</u>

I desire to say one more thing - or utter a lament -

About myself- invoking Helios

On this my last day, that the defender of my honour

Is a killer exacting from my enemies what they did from me

Who, easily-overcome, dies a slave.

Alas! - for those concerns of mortals. A lucky fate

Is a shadowy thing that can change: and if an unlucky fate
Strikes, what is written about someone is destroyed by a moistened sponge;
And then there is much more to make lament for.

[Exit Cassandra]

Chorus:

All mortals who do well bring forth Insatiability,
And not one of them, pointing their finger, declares it will be kept out
Of his dwelling, saying: "No longer enter here!"
And thus it is with he whom the Immortal Ones allowed to capture
The citadel of Priam and who arrived at his home, honoured by those gods.
But now if he is to render tribute for ancient bloodshed by others
And by dying for those deaths
Require compensation by more deaths,
Then who among mortals is there, on hearing of these things,
Who would boast that the daimon they were born with
Would do them no harm?

[A cry of pain is heard]

Agamemnon: [from within the dwelling]:
I am grievously wounded - cut, deeply!

Chorus;

[The Leader of the Chorus turns to the other members:]

Quiet!

[He then turns toward the dwelling:]

Who cries "I am cut - grievously hit!"?

Agamemnon:

Yet more! A second wound!

Chorus:

Since it is the Chief who shouts, my belief is that that deed is done.

But let us together, consult, to consider what is without fault.

[The Chorus each speak in turn]

I shall tell you how I understand things:

We shout for assistance - "You people: here, to this abode!"

* My opinion is that we swiftly rush in

And charge them with the deed while the sword is freshly dripping.

I agree with your understanding of this matter:

I vote we act! The moment is right! - we should not delay!

I know what it is! This is the first act of those people

Whose banner is that of some tyrant!

* Indeed - because we wait! While we delay, they trample our glory

Underfoot! Their hands do not rest!

* I know I cannot find a good plan to tell you of -

It is warriors who should make plans for such things.

And I agree with you - since words are not an effective device

By which the dead may be raised up again.

And shall we then destroy our livelihood by submitting

To those leaders who have disgraced that family?

* That would be unbearable: it would be better to die,

Such a fate being more acceptable than being ruled by some tyrant!

Are we then taking that cry as a sign,

Predicting that the man has been killed?

To discuss this matter, it is necessary that we see the evidence:

Since without seeing the evidence, we are guessing.

[The leader of the Chorus speaks again:]

From all sides, there is an increase in those who approve of that:

We must see the son of Atreus clearly to confirm how he is.

[The gates open to reveal Clytaemnestra standing beside the bodies of

Agamemnon and Cassandra]

Clytaemnestra:

Although much of what I said before was for a purpose,
There was no disgrace in saying it:
For how else - while preparing hostile things for enemies
Who appeared to be friends - to set an injurious trap
Too high to be jumped out of?
And I did not lack for reasons for this ancient fight
Where the victory, although delayed, has at last arrived.
And I remain here, where I attacked - beside my achievement!

Such was my deed - I will not deny it -
So that he could neither escape from nor ward off his fate.
As when fishing, there was a complete surrounding:
A placing-around of an abundant injurious garment!
And I struck him twice - with two loud cries
His joints were loosened there, and, as he fell,
I gave a third as well for the one below the ground,
Invoking a favour from Hades, preserver of corpses.

Thus he fell - gasping for his life,
And swiftly spurted forth his sacrificial blood,
Striking me with dark, wet, crimson drops!
And my rejoicing was not inferior to when that delightful Zeus-given rain

Seeded the concealed sheath to bring-forth a new birth!

So things are - and you, Elders of Argos,
Can rejoice if you do rejoice at this. I myself offer exultant invocations:
If it is necessary to make a libation over that corpse
Then such a thing is fitting: indeed, more than fitting
Since so full had he filled his chalice with so many misfortunes
For his family, that he on his returning had to empty it himself.

Chorus:

I am astonished at your words! Such boldness
To boast of such things when speaking about your man!

Clytaemnestra:

You challenge me as if I were a woman lacking in reason
But I, fearless of heart, speak to those who know
Whether or not your will is to praise or rebuke me.
Here is my husband, Agamemnon -
A corpse by that work which this is my right-hand
Fittingly executed. It is thus that things are!

Chorus:

Woman! What injurious soil-grown edible thing -

Or what drink drawn from the salt-sea - have you tasted
That, by such a sacrifice, you place upon yourself the people's curse:
Set apart, cast out - belonging to no clan
And mightily hated by this community?

Clytaemnestra:

Now you deem it fitting to exile me from my clan
And bear the hatred and curses of the people of this community
Although you then did not oppose that man
Who valued her death no more than if she had been some beast
From his well-fleeced abundant herds of sheep!
He sacrificed his own child - she, my beloved,
Brought forth through my pain - to charm with incantations those
Thracian storms.
Should it not have been he who was banished from his native soil
As payment for that pollution? But, having heard of my work,
You judge me harshly. As to the threats you have uttered.
I am ready for all of them: he who can overcome me in a fight
Will command me, but should the gods accomplish the opposite,
Your instruction in how to be discreet will have been to late!

Chorus:

Sufficient was your planning, well-thought out your words -
But it is your reason which will be lost because of that blood-stain:

Over your face, blood and gore are spattered.
For it is necessary that you - robbed of your friends -
Be paid-back, wound for wound.

Clytaemnestra:

Now hear what is just - my oath!

I swear by the goddess, Judgement, that I accomplished this for my daughter -
And also by Ate and Erinys for whom I slit his throat.
Thus could I hope to enter, without fear, that dwelling
Until Aegisthus makes the fire on my hearth:
He who has previously been well-disposed toward me.
For, there, is that not insignificant shield who gave us courage
There lies he who dishonoured this woman,
He who while near Ilion was the delight of those like the daughter of Chryseis
And she whom he won by his spear - that observer of omens
With whom he had intercourse, that prophetess who loyally slept with him
Even when his ship was under sail at sea!
And such conduct was not without dishonour!
For thus things are: he was laid out here while she,
As is the custom with swans, wailed her last call for her loved one
While she died, serving me additional dish -
Sensuous and spicy - because they had been lovers!

Chorus:

If only something, neither excessively painful

Nor which makes me bed-ridden - some fate - would swiftly arrive

To convey me to that everlasting endless sleep,

Since he, our protector, well-disposed toward us, has been tamed

Having endured much from a woman

And having that woman end his life.

Helen - you who went beyond what is proper -

Because of you alone that multitude, that great multitude,

Lost their lives near Troy!

Now you have crowned that long-to-be-recalled achievement

By this blood you cannot wash away -

For you were in that dwelling,

You, Strife - who by an affliction vigorously tamed a man!

<u>Clytaemnestra:</u>

Because of these grievous things, no one should invoke a fatal curse upon

Nor turn their wroth toward, Helen

As if she was some man-killer who alone destroyed

The lives of those many Danaan men

By having wrought such a festering wound!

<u>Chorus:</u>

You - daimon - who has befallen that family

And those two descendants of Tantalus:
Your strength is in those women whose natures are the same -
So strong, you gnaw at my heart!
And, as is customary among hostile ravens, you stand
Upon that body, calling your invoking unnatural call!

Clytaemnestra :

What you spoke of knowing is now put right
By you calling upon the thrice-fed daimon of this family:
For there was in him a lust to feed on fresh food by sucking new blood
Before this most ancient affliction was over.

Chorus:

What you praise in indeed for that family
a mighty and wrothful daimon -
But it is an ill-omened praising of a still unsatisfied, injurious misfortune.
It is Zeus who causes everything, who cultivates all things -
For what can mortals achieve without Zeus?
What of this has been done without some god?

My Chief - how may I make lament for you?
What can I say so that others can judge our friendship?
But you are there - within what that spider wove,
Having breathed out your life: killed, with no respect shown,

By that ignoble embrace -

Tamed by death through a cunning hand

With a double-edged weapon

Clytaemnestra:

So you affirm that it was me who did that work?

But do not add to those words that it was me who was the mistress of Agamemnon

Since the wife of this corpse presents herself here

As that most ancient fierce Avenger.

It is Atreus, he is of that cruel feast,

Who, in payment for that, has added to his young victims

This adult one.

Chorus:

Is there anyone who will bear witness

That you are blameless in this killing?

But - how can that be? Perhaps, because of that one's father,

The Avenger might have helped you -

Dark Ares compelled

By the blood flowing from those sharing the same seed

To go to where he will give satisfaction

For those stains left behind after those boys

Had been made into food.

My Chief - how may I make lament for you?
What can I say so that others can judge our friendship?
But you are there - within what that spider wove,
Having breathed out your life: killed, with no respect shown,
By that ignoble embrace -
Tamed by death through a cunning hand
With a double-edged weapon.

Clytaemnestra:

But do not suppose that his killing was ignoble
For did he not by his cunning set Misfortune upon this family?
Since he to that young shoot which I raised -
My lphigenia, of the many laments -
Did what merited him suffering what he did,
Then he cannot, before Hades, make great boasts,
Having been killed by a sword-wound to pay for what *he* began!

Chorus:

I lack a plan - robbed of reasons,
I am divided about the right means:
What to do now this family has fallen?
I fear blood thundering-down during a storm
Which will shake this settlement!

The drizzle has ceased - and for another deed of injury,
Fate sharpens another sword/for the goddess, Judgement.

Gaia! - Would that you had consumed me
Before I was shown him laid low while in his silver-walled bath!
Who will bury him? Who will give his eulogy?

Will you - having killed your own man - dare
To make lament for his life, unfairly granting him
Such a thankless favour for his mighty deeds?
Who over his cairn will utter the praises
Of he who, descended from a god, was a hero?
Who, through such a labour, will reveal his heart?

Clytaemnestra:

It is not fitting for you to trouble yourself with such concerns.
It was by me that he fell, that he died -
And so I shall bury him, with no family lamenting him,
Although his daughter, lphigenia - as she ought to -
Will welcome her father
After he is ferried over the swift-flowing Acheron,
Embracing him with a kiss.

Chorus:

This rebuke has arisen because of the other rebukes:

And it is difficult to choose which side to fight on.

He who carried things away, is carried away - having killed, he has paid;

For this remains, while the aeon of Zeus remains:

There is adversity in deeds, for that is his law.

Who in that family can expel the seed of that curse?

For Misfortune has fastened herself onto that brood.

<u>Clytaemnestra:</u>

Until now, what the oracle revealed has been followed:

And so therefore I am willing to make a pact with the daimon of Pleisthenes.

That I - difficult to bear though this is - be content with things as they are.

While on his part, he goes from this family

To another brood to waste them away by kin killing kin.

A small share of my property is entirely sufficient for me

If I remove from this dwelling this kin-slaying frenzy.

[Enter Aegisthus, with an armed escort]

<u>Aegisthus:</u>

Hail! To this well-judged light of this day which has brought me satisfaction!

Now I can reveal how mortals are protected

By those gods who - from above this land - behold our afflictions,

Who see - in a robe woven by the Furies -

What is pleasing to me: a man lying here

Who has paid for what the hands of his father planned.

For when Atreus, the father of him, there, ruled this land -
And I shall speak clearly - he who was my father
Disputed the authority of his own brother
Who exiled him from his own clan and family.
But, returning to the family-altar to be purified of his stain,
The unfortunate Thyestes found his fate was so secure
That his blood was not shed upon his native soil.
Instead, Atreus - he of an unlucky god and father to that person there -
Was a host who had a greater purpose than friendship
For he, pretending to be well-disposed to my father on that festive meat-day,
Placed before him a feast made from the flesh of his children.
The toes and the fingers of the hands
He had ground down to spread over what he, sitting alone,
With no clues, unknowingly received, and so ate
What was - as you behold - unsafe food for his kin.
And when he did know of his inauspicious deed,
He cried out - and leant forward to vomit out the bloody sacrifice,
Invoking upon the descendants of Pelops an unbearable fate,
Kicking over that meal-table as he rightly made his curse:
"May the whole clan of Pleisthenes perish!"

It is because of this that you behold that person there, dead
And only fair that I contrived his killing
For, with my unfortunate father, I - his third -
Then small, enwrapped in swaddling clothes, had been driven out with him

And, having grown up, was brought back here by the goddess, Judgement.
For, even while aboard, I fastened myself to that man
And put-together this whole cunningly-devised plan.
Thus I can now die, content -
Having killed him, there, ensnared by the goddess, Judgement!

Chorus:

Aegisthus! I cannot respect someone who is insolvent about his treachery!
For you say you willfully killed this man
And alone devised such a woeful death.
I affirm that your head will not escape from the judgement
Of the community who will, be assured, curse you with their stones!

Aegisthus:

You who say such things sit lower down, at the oars,
While it is those on the steersman's seat who command the ship!
You will come to know how grievous it is for someone
As old as you to be taught - when ordered to be reasonable!
For bonds and the pains of hunger are - even for the old -
Most excellent teachers of the powers of reason!
Can you who see not see this?
You should not kick at your masters, for in trying to strike, you will be hurt!

Chorus:

You woman! You who waited here when others went to war -

Who only then dishonoured the wife of a Chief! -

Was it you who contrived the death of that warrior Chieftain?

<u>Aegisthus:</u>

Those words will be the genesis of your lamentation!

The sounds you make are the opposite of those of Orpheus

For whereas he through his delightful voice could persuade anyone,

You - having angered us by your infantile howlings -

Will be persuaded by us, revealed as tame when we overpower you!

<u>Chorus:</u>

You could never be King of the Argives!

You who although contriving that death

Could not even do the killing yourself!

<u>Aegisthus:</u>

Such deceit was clearly for his woman

Since I as an old clan rival was not trusted.

However, by his wealth I will seek to rule this clan,

And those who do not obey me

1 shall harshly bind - unlike an unharnessed

Barley-fed horse! - and house them, hungry,

In unfriendly darkness, to watch them weaken!

<u>Chorus:</u>

Was it because of your cowardly spirit

That you did not yourself kill that man, but let a woman -

To so defile our soil and our native gods -

Do your killing?

Orestes! Do you behold the light of day?

Can you - by the grace of Fortuna - return here

To become the conqueror who slays these two?

<u>Aegisthus:</u>

Since you deem to act and speak so - your learning will be swift!

<u>Chorus:</u>

Comrades! Prepare for battle! This deed is not far off!

<u>Aegisthus:</u> [to his guards]

Prepare! All of you - draw your swords in readiness!

<u>Chorus:</u>

I also am ready: <u>I</u> am not afraid to die!

<u>Aegisthus:</u>

We accept your words "To the death!" You have chosen your fate!

Clytaemnestra [To Aegisthus]:

My dearest - let us not do any more harm,
For to reap these many would make it an unlucky harvest:
Injure them just enough, but do not stain us with their blood.
You Elders - go to your families, as fate decrees,
Before, by acting, you suffer in vain. What was done, was necessary.

If of those troubles this should be a remedy, accept it:
An unlucky wound from the grievous claw of some daimon.
Such is the advice of a woman - should you deem to accept it.

Aegisthus:

But is his foolish tongue to blossom before me
By him casting forth such words - testing his daimon -
And being deprived of that learning of reason for so abusing my authority?

Chorus:

Not one of us Argives would submit to a coward!

Aegisthus:

Some day, after this, I shall get you!

Chorus:

Not if a daimon should command Orestes to return here.

Aegisthus:

I know that men in exile feed themselves on hope.

Chorus:

Continue, fatten yourself, defile what is fair - while you can!

Aegisthus:

Be assured that I will exact payment from you for this stupidity!

Chorus:

You boldly strut about - as a hen beside its cock!

Clytaemnestra [To Aegisthus]:

Have no regard for such idle howlings! It is you and I
Who have the power to make where we live favourable for us.

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